

Confirmation Questions and Answers



What is the new age for when someone can be Confirmed?

Over the next several years, every parish/pastorate in the Archdiocese of Baltimore will shift from their typical age of Confirmation (typically between grades 8-10) to a universal norm of age 9 (around grade 4) as the standard earliest age of Confirmation.

Once fully implemented, Confirmation at age 9 will be considered standard practice, and all of our parish and pastorate programs will be built around 9 being the standard age.

As is the case now, if someone does not choose to be Confirmed at the common age, Confirmation formation and preparation will always be available to those individuals who choose to participate later in their life (i.e., as older children, teens, or adults).

Are 9-year-olds mature enough to be Confirmed?

In short: yes. Some of the confusion stems from misunderstandings of the theology of Confirmation (for more, see the below Section from the Catechism of the Catholic Church).

For example:

- Confirmation is truly about one's openness to the work of the Holy Spirit, not about how much one knows about the faith. Nine-year-olds are not just capable of this openness but are often particularly receptive.
- Many people feel Confirmation is about "becoming an adult in the faith" (similar to a Catholic version of a bar or bat mitzvah), but that is not accurate. Confirmation enables one to be a witness for Christ, and the lives of the Saints show us that young disciples are some of the most effective witnesses of all.
- Confirmation is not a choice that a person makes to "confirm" his or her faith as they enter adulthood – it is God's action of sealing and fully unleashing the Holy Spirit already present in that person through baptism.
- Confirmation is a Sacrament of Initiation not a graduation. Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist mark the beginning of our journey to understand the ever-unfolding mystery of God's work in our lives. Some consider Confirmation a "graduation" of sorts, marking the end of formal catechesis, and that is not the case. Faith formation is a lifelong adventure! This change makes that theological reality even more clear.

Does a younger Confirmation age keep individuals and families more engaged in their faith?

When implemented in tandem with an intentional focus on how we form children and parents in lifelong faith, Confirmation at an earlier age can transform the way families experience formation. By adjusting the standard age, the Church may reclaim the true nature of the Sacrament: a gift to be shared and an invitation to discipleship, fostered with ongoing catechesis and accompaniment at every stage, especially during the immediate post-Confirmation years.

The Effects of Confirmation

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, The Sacrament of Confirmation, Section III:

¹³⁰² It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

¹³⁰³ From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:

- it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, "Abba! Father!"

- it unites us more firmly to Christ;
- it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
- it renders our bond with the Church more perfect;
- it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross:

Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God's presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts.

¹³⁰⁴ Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the "character," which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness.

¹³⁰⁵ This "character" perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, received in Baptism, and "the confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and as it were officially (quasi ex officio).